

Theological Research and Writing

2PT703

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Course Description:

This is a two hour practical theology course on theological research and writing. The course will give special attention to using the library, writing graduate level research papers, and the problem of plagiarism. This course is designed to help you communicate well. Written communication and oral communication overlap, so whether you are going on for graduate studies or studying to become a pastor, you will need to learn how to develop and deliver a thesis.

Goals:

1. Students will understand how to use library resources and services effectively.
2. Students will learn about the kinds of writing and research projects they will be completing in seminary and how best to complete this work.
3. Students will recognize what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.
4. Students will learn how to compile and manage bibliographies.
5. Students will write a graduate level research paper.

Class Meetings

Thursdays 8:00 am-9:55 am Classroom TBD

We will begin each class in our classroom for lecture and discussion. We will end several classes with a “lab” in the library where we will work on small assignments as well as the research paper. Towards the end of the semester you will give an oral presentation of your papers in class.

Assignments

1. Paper (70%). The research paper will be the major focus of this class. At the end of the semester, the successful student will have written a 12-15 page research paper on a topic of their choosing that has been cleared by the professor. Students may use the research for this paper for another assignment as long as they have the permission of the other professor. The paper you hand in for me, must meet all of my requirements which are listed below. Students must choose a topic that is narrow enough so that it can be adequately explained in a 15 page paper, yet broad enough for them to find a sufficient number of resources.

- The paper will be 15-20 pages, plus a 1-2 page “Works Cited” section. The works cited section does not count toward the page total and will include only items that have been used and referenced in the paper. The title page is also not to be included in the page total. The paper will be double spaced and the body will be no less than 4,000 words.
- The paper will utilize at least 15 high quality resources. At least 3 of these resources must be scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. At least one of these sources must be an inter-library loan. (I want everyone to be familiar with ILL’s by the time they finish this class.) An “A” paper will utilize at least 20 resources; any paper with fewer than 15 resources will not receive a passing grade.
- The paper will have a thesis statement. The thesis statement will be clear and concise and will tell the reader exactly what the paper is about. The thesis statement will be at the beginning of the paper. The entire paper will be centered on proving this thesis statement. We will discuss developing a good thesis statement at length during the semester.
- The paper will follow the guidelines set forth in: Turabian, Kate L. 2007. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago style for students and researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. You may use either parenthetical or footnote citations, but you must be consistent and it must follow Turabian guidelines. Please note, I really, really, really prefer footnotes to parenthetical citation. I will try hard not to judge your paper more harshly if you use parenthetical citation, but I don’t know if I’ll be successful.
- This is how your paper will be evaluated:
 - An “A” paper will evidence strong research and provide a unique contribution to the field. It will contain no typos or grammar errors. To get an idea of what an “A” paper looks like, read an article in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.
 - A “B” paper will meet the basic requirements and will be well-written. It may not provide a unique contribution to its topic.
 - A “C” paper will meet the basic requirements and contain a few errors such as typos or poorly constructed sentences.
 - A “D” paper will meet the basic requirements but will contain many errors and be difficult to follow.
 - You will receive an “F” on your paper if you do not meet the basic requirements, you plagiarize, you do not stick to a clearly worded and concise thesis statement, or your paper is very poorly written.

When I evaluate your paper I will be looking at style, sources and content...with the heaviest emphasis upon style. Here are some things I will be evaluating:

1. Did you use credible sources?
2. Did you use credible sources well (proper use of quotes, good integration of material, effective summaries, etc.
3. Did you stick to the thesis statement?
4. Does the paper have a logical flow and coherence?
5. Spelling and Grammar
6. Paragraph Unity

7. Are your sentences clear and concise?
8. Academic look and feel
9. Have you proven your point?

You will be required to hand in two rough drafts to me (maybe more). You will hand in your “best work” for each rough draft. The first rough draft is due by 3:00 pm on November 3rd. It must be emailed to me in Word. This paper should represent a completed paper that you would be willing to hand in as a final draft. It should not be rough notes. For this draft, I will be looking at the “big picture” of your paper. Does your paper stick to its thesis statement? Is there a logical flow to your paper? Does your paper have paragraph unity? These are the kinds of questions I will be asking as I mark your paper. If there is a major problem with your paper I will discuss this with you. I will email your papers back to you on November 10th. You will make corrections based upon my notes and hand in a second draft on November 17th. This time, I will make corrections at the sentence level. Are your sentences clear and concise?

I will hand this draft back to you with my notes on December 1st. Your final paper is due on December 7th.

One of the goals for this class is to get you in the habit of beginning your research early in the semester so that you have time to find all the sources you may need. During the first part of the semester, you will be researching and writing. During the second part of the semester, you will be revising. During this revision period, I may ask you to come into my office so we can talk about your paper. Extensions will not be granted except for dire emergencies. A dire emergency would be the death of a loved one...a dire emergency is not “I have a lot of stuff due this week and need more time.”

2. Reading. 10%

The textbook for this course is

Yaghjian, Lucretia. *Writing theology well : a rhetoric for theological and biblical writers*. New York: Continuum, 2006.

Students will also need to use:

Turabian, Kate L. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago style for students and researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Students will also be required to read Ryken, Leland. *The Legacy of the King James Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011

Students will read the chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12 of Yaghjian. Students will also be required to read Ryken’s book in its entirety. Ryken’s book is the One School One Book selection this year and should help you learn about excellent writing. In addition, students will need to read at least 100 pages on their research paper topic. You may substitute extra reading you do during your research for chapters in Yaghjian if you wish. Students will indicate on the term paper deadline date what percentage of the assigned reading they have completed.

You should not read Yaghjian as if she tells you the only or even the best way to write papers. Rather she should give you ideas about how you can write well. Everyone does research a little bit differently and everyone writes with a unique “voice.” The textbook

should help you find that “voice” and ensure that you aren’t “off key.” Yaghjian is a theological liberal. I could not find a good “orthodox” guide to theological writing. Please ignore Yaghjian’s theological liberalism. Do not follow her advice on gender neutral language for God.

Another note about the textbooks. You are not required to purchase these books. I refer to Turabian frequently and think you would benefit from having your own copy. It is on the reference shelf in the library. You will probably not refer to Yaghjian later in life, so I recommend you read the required chapters from the library copy which will be on the reserve shelf. Ryken will also be on the reserve shelf if you choose not to buy this book.

3. Class participation. 20%

There will be small projects during the semester that the class will complete during our meeting times. At the end of the semester, you will give an oral presentation of your research. This will be a 5 minute summary of your paper. Rather than looking for a polished speech, I will be looking at how well you succinctly state your thesis and then support it. After you give your presentation, you will answer questions about your thesis from the class.

Key Dates

August 25th First day of class

October 13th Reading week no class

November 3rd 1st rough draft due date

November 10th Michael returns 1st rough draft

November 17th Oral Presentations of paper. Second rough draft due.

November 24th Thanksgiving no class

December 1st Michael returns your second rough drafts. Oral Presentations of Paper.

December 7th 11:00 AM Term paper deadline All reading for course must be completed by this date.

Office Hours

I am available in my office between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. If this does not work with your schedule, please contact me for an appointment.